

aside money for their children. It's a lot for moms and dads who are concerned about the future of their family. It's a lot. And my attitude is, once we made basic needs, I'd rather have these good people spending the \$2,000 than the United States Congress spending it.

It's a fundamental decision where we put our trust. And that's what I want this debate to focus on: Who do you trust? Oh, I love dealing with the Members of the Congress, and they're good folks. They care a lot about their country. But we ought to trust the people of America. We ought to trust them to spend their own money. We ought to trust them to make the right decisions for their families. We ought to have a limited and focused and energetic Federal Government that, when it's all said and done, holds the people up in our trust.

And after all, that's not only important for good economic policy; that's important to make sure America fulfills its promise for everybody who is fortunate enough to live here. Because, you see, the great strength of the country really doesn't exist in the halls of our governments; the great strength of America is in the hearts and souls of the American citizens.

One of the biggest honors of my job is to be able to travel the country and say thanks to those social entrepreneurs who literally change America, one face at a time; people who don't wait for Government to act and who say to a neighbor in need, "What can I do to help? What can I do, brother or sister, to help you on your walk?" I think of Catholic Charities that provide such incredible service all around America. I think about homeless shelters staffed by volunteers who feel the need to help somebody in need. No, the great strength of this country, folks, exists in neighborhood after neighborhood after neighborhood, where people of religion and people who don't give a hoot about religion say, "What can I do to help a neighbor in need?"

My job is not only to argue good policy on behalf of the people and argue on your behalf to make sure your money ends up in your pocket after needs are met; my job is also to lift the spirit of the country and to call upon the best, to work to unite our Nation, but always remember that the true

strength of America is our people and the hearts of our people and the compassion of America.

I'm fortunate to be the President of the greatest land on the face of the Earth. It's an unimaginable honor. And I want to thank you all for giving me the chance to come and talk about a commonsense policy for the budget, but to remind you that if you see somebody in need, put your arm around them; tell them God loves them.

Godspeed to you all, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:35 p.m. in the ballroom at the East Brunswick Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to Acting Gov. Donald T. DiFrancesco of New Jersey; Diane DiFrancesco, Governor DiFrancesco's wife; New Jersey State Assembly Speaker Jack Collins; and Joan Verplanck, president, New Jersey Chamber of Commerce.

Exchange With Reporters on Returning From the Friends of Ireland Luncheon on Capitol Hill

March 15, 2001

The President. Hey, look who's here.

The First Lady. Hi, everybody.

The President. Barney's back. [*Laughter*]

The First Lady. Barney had a really good trip.

The President. Hey, Spot, look who's here.

Q. Mrs. Bush, where are you coming from?

The First Lady. I'm coming from Texas. I've been at the ranch.

Meeting With Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland

Q. What do you expect out of your meeting with the Irish leaders?

The President. Pardon me?

Q. What do you expect out of your meeting with the Irish PM—Prime Minister?

The President. I had a good meeting, and I'll have one tomorrow, as well. Looking forward to it. We'll be discussing the Good Friday agreement, what I can do to help—be reaffirming our trade with Ireland. We had a good visit with him at lunch. I'm looking forward to seeing him tomorrow.

Campaign Finance Reform Legislation

Q. Mr. President, are you prepared to send your suggestions on campaign finance legislation to the Hill, and——

The President. Pretty soon.

Q. ——what would you like to see in it?

The President. Well, wait until I send them up there, but we'll be sending some principles up here pretty soon.

Q. Not today?

The President. Maybe today.

Q. Mr. President, to follow up, I mean, do you still support limited soft money contributions?

The President. I think we ought to get rid of labor union and corporate soft money. And I know we need to make sure we have—to make sure that shareholders and labor union members have got a say-so on how their money is spent.

Assistant Press Secretary Gordon Johndroe. Thank you all very much.

The President. Just getting warmed up. [Laughter]

Q. Thank you, Barney.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 2:22 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to his dogs Spot and Barney. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Letter to the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders on Campaign Finance Reform Legislation

March 15, 2001

Dear _____:

As the Senate prepares to consider campaign finance reform legislation, I wanted to highlight my principles for reform. I am committed to working with the Congress to ensure that fair and balanced campaign finance reform legislation is enacted.

These principles represent my framework for assessing campaign finance reform legislation. I remain open to other ideas to meet our shared goals.

I am hopeful that, working together, we can achieve responsible campaign finance reforms.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

Campaign Finance Reform: President Bush's Reform Principles

Protect Rights of Individuals to Participate in Democracy: President Bush believes democracy is first and foremost about the rights of individuals to express their views. He supports strengthening the role of individuals in the political process by: 1) updating the limits established more than two decades ago on individual giving to candidates and national parties; and 2) protecting the rights of citizen groups to engage in issue advocacy.

Maintain Strong Political Parties: President Bush believes political parties play an essential role in making America's democratic system operate. He wants to maintain the strength of parties, and not to weaken them. Any reform should help political parties more fully engage citizens in the political process and encourage them to express their views and to vote.

Ban Corporate and Union Soft Money: Corporations and labor unions spend millions of dollars every election cycle in unregulated "soft" money to influence federal elections. President Bush supports a ban on unregulated corporate and union contributions of soft money to political parties.

Eliminate Involuntary Contributions: President Bush believes no one should be forced to support a candidate or cause against his or her will. He therefore supports two parallel reforms: 1) legislation to prohibit corporations from using treasury funds for political activity without the permission of shareholders; and 2) legislation to require unions to obtain authorization from each dues-paying worker before spending those dues on activities unrelated to collective bargaining.

Require Full and Prompt Disclosure: President Bush also believes that in an open society, the best safeguard against abuse is full disclosure. He supports full, prompt and